

critical digest

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T. M. KRAUS

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New York Theatre Diary

Haven in the Dark- Originals Only 3/4/54. Donald Stuart, Henry Hood, Mary Stewart, and Eleanor Lee are featured in casts of Paul Nord's drama, directed by Aliki. Two companies alternate...The Burning Glass-Longacre- 4/4/54. Theatre Guild presents a new play by Charles Morgan about a scientist whose invention becomes the concern of 2 international powers. Luther Kennett directed cast headed by Cedric Hardwicke, Isobel Elsom, Maria Riva, and Walter Matthau ...The Girl in Pink Tights- Hellinger 3/5/54. Shepard Traube and Anthony Farrell present Jerome Chodorov-Joseph Fields musical comedy about the romance of the Premiere Ballerina of the first French ballet company to visit NY(1867) with an American playwright. Jeanmaire, Charles Goldner, Brenda Lewis and David Atkinson. Music by Romberg. Postponed from last week.

Current Theatre Reviews- Off Broadway Week

Praise of Folly- Blackfriars Guild 2/23/54. 5 NY daily critics praised John McGuire's play on Sir Thomas More, which will be presented for the next 5 weeks at the Blackfriars 57th St theatre. Cast headed by Vince Harding, Mark Voland, Jayne Heller, and staged by Dennis Gurney, shared the pro notices. Shalev, Times, rated it a literate, intelligent, dramatically effective presentation of the climatic years in the life of an intellectual with courage and high principles. Coleman, Mirror, found play accurate and interesting. Critic recommended it as a moving and stimulating play for those who admire men of character and high purpose. McClain, Journal American, okay evening as a thoughtful and engaging Off Broadway effort. While Rice, Post, noted that production should appeal to theatre fans beyond the specialized audience for which it was intended. Kerner, Women's Wear, listed it as an enterthing and at times absorbing tribute to More.

Time of Storm- Greenwich Mews 2/24/54. Sheldon Stark's drama about the witch-hunts in Massachusetts in 1693 won 4 pros from NY daily critics, and 2 cons from trade reviewers. A stern, well written play, okayed Atkinson, Times. Critic found performances, directed by Michael Howard, stimulating and fluent, though over-emphatic in the small 13th st basement theatre. Cast is headed by Mike Kellin and Jane White. Except for leads, Times man noted, actors spoke in a variety of accents ranging from simple unintelligibility to ugliness. He hopes this is cleared up soon. Rice, Post, rated script worthy of attention, but blamed the director for treating it like an Actors Studio exercise. Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun, admitted play is not equal to Arthur Miller's The Crucible, but liked it because it afforded the actors material for the creation of excitement. Greenberg, Show Business, panned it as a curious mixture of 3 distinct points of view which never blend. Jess, Variety, feared first two acts failed to register effectively. Admission is by voluntary contribution.

Hits Revisted

The Fifth Season celebrated its first year on Broadway because it dishes out heavy dosage of laugh lines that get hearty audience reception, reports Jess, Variety. Menasha Skulnick continues to milk author's material dry with a characterization that is both sincere and comical. Though trade paper mugg though Richard Whorf's galloping pace was a little too frantic in spots. Bill Penn, who replaced Dick Kallman, turns in a likeable performance. Other roles are handled smoothly.

' Off Broadway ' *-----*

Stage Managers Club at 234 W 44 is conducting a talent search for April 9 "Talent '54" showcase revue...St. John Terrell, Lambertville, NJ Music Circus producer may produce a series of short plays by William Vance at Theatre de Lys this spring with Frank Albertson, Roberta Jonay.

Mystery at Greenfingers by J B Priestley will be presented at Neighborhood Playhouse School of Theatre March 2 to 6...Jack Cannon, Patricia Ripley, June Hunt in Artists Theatre production of R. Hivaor's The Ticklish Acrobat March 8 to 10 at Amato Theatre...Jean Cocteau's The Infernal Machine to be presented by Club Theatre, Inc. 115 W 52nd for 4 weekends in March.

Richard Barr, co-producer of Ruth Draper show, has taken over as director of Broadway Chapel Players production of Christopher Fry's The Boy With A Cart. Ernestine Pierie had to relinquish her duties to devote full time to casting 4 shows she will stage in April at Bermudiana Theatre, Hamilton, Bermuda.

American Savoyards will present 10 weeks of Gilbert & Sullivan at President Theatre starting March 23. Group formerly known as Masque & Lyre played at Jan Hus House for years....Herod and Mariane adapted by Paul Curts from Hebbel's play will be presented by John Hall Players, 342 E 63 March 22-26.

' Vaudeville ' *-----*

Lou Handman heads new Palace show. Others include Harry Savoy, Three Arnauts, Bruce Howard, Six Antonetts, Duval and Company, Roberto & Alicia and Laflotte Duo.

' Theatre TV & Radio Notes ' *-----*

"Thoughts on Theatre" lecture by Jean Louis Barrault will be heard on WNYC(NYC) at 4 PM March 6...John and Alice Griffin commenting on theatre 3 nights a week on WOR TV "Man of Times Square" at 11 PM..Morning Star to be presented on ABC TV US Steel March 2.

' Theatre Book Comments ' *-----*

"Rope on the Aisle" by Claudia C. C. by, Chicago Tribune, is an informative and entertaining book, rates Coleman, Mirror. NY critic was startled to learn of the many music and drama festivals being held in Europe.

"Around Theatres" by Max Beerbohm (British Book Centre) is a handsome single volume container of the cream of the master's criticism of the theatre, raves Dent, Saturday Review.

"Dictionary of Shakespeare's Quotations" compiled by D.C. Browning is a valuable addition to any theatre reference shelf, recommends Coleman, Mirror.

' Theatre TV Comments ' *-----*

Anything Goes, which was presented on NBC TV Comedy Hour Feb 28 with Ethel Merman and Bert Lahr, originally opened on Broadway Nov 21, 1934 at the Alvin. Starring Ethel Merman, Victor Moore and William Gaxton it ran for 420 performances. NY daily drama critics cheered. Some minor complaint was filed by Percy Hammond, Herald Tribune, who found some of the lyrics wicked.

Tune WNYC(NYC) Ben Grauer 7 30 AM day after opening for "CD" quotes of reviews

' Task of Critic ' *-----*

Conviction is the first necessity of the drama critic, states T.C. Worsley, Listener. The reviewer's task in today's theatre is holding the balance, in denouncing the producer's excesses, but also in explaining his virtues and his uses. It is a myth, the English critic notes, that the critics can make or unmake a play. But they do a great deal towards creating the climate of opinion within which a new play or production fails or succeeds. Above all the critic must make it abundantly clear that he really cares.

* Green Room Department *

PRO THEATRE FEUDS...Press agents, producers, actors, and everybody else involved in legitimate drama these days bend over backwards to make everything sound peachy on stage, comments Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun. Instead, critic believes, they make theatre sound dull. Propriety companions enough of us in the audience. What the theatre needs is to be proud of its excitement and the friction that sets it aflame.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...Getting seats for the Broadway successes seems so complex and mysterious a task, that if Watts, Post, were not a drama critic he is afraid he would rarely manage to see the inside of a theatre...After reading Maurice Zolotow's Theatre Arts article on liquor in London theatre, Sheaffer, Eagle, wonders that there are any hits on Broadway...Leona Messina, is a blonde beauty who belongs in a Broadway musical show, urges Morehouse, WT & S.

"RED" NY CRITICS...Myron Fagan, author and producer of A Red Rainbow, who accuses the NY critics of being Communistic for panning his anti-communist script, is already in difficulty with NY critics, reports Gray, Post. One of them has threatened to sue Fagan for libel. Rather than spend 3 years in a libel case, Gray suggests a public hearing for Fagan before a congressional committee.

COLUMN TIPS...Ondine tickets being scalped at \$125 a pair, hears Kilgallen... Herald Tribune may assign a Variety critic to cover King of Hearts, which Walter Kerr directs, reports Lyons...J J Shubert and Lawrence Shubert Lawrence have ended their long term feud, notes Eaton...Producers of a year old comedy went hog wild and give each member of cast an ashtray on show's anniversary, quips Sylvester.

PRE AWARD SEASON...Rushing the annual season known some time as "award madness", Coleman, Mirror, votes for Kay Medford, Lullaby, as the young actress giving the best performance of the season.

LEVIN'S PLANS...Second ad in NY Post by Meyer Levin urging public to support his demand for a public hearing for his dramatic adaption of the "Diary of Anna Frank" by producer Kermit Bloomgarden points out that groups in Boston, Buffalo, Lexington and Brooklyn have offered his script a hearing. Writer asks if any producer has the moral right to ignore such public requests. Readers were asked to write Otto Frank, Doubleday, 575 Madison, asking for test.

* Pros & Cons by TMK *

Pity the producer who feels he must have a star to have a hit, but must also okay the star's leaving after 3 months to make a film...Though it is wonderful that many first string critics cover more and more Off Broadway shows, they should not fall into the error of comparing a \$300 production downtown, with a \$50,000 show uptown. Experimentalism is one thing, taking advantage of actor and craft unions is unfair to all involved.

* "CD" Gift Coupon *

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The Girl in Pink Tights postponement to Friday, March 5 may cause some confusion at the Hellinger box office due to the number of benefits sold in advance. Only those tickets marked "Opening Night" will be honored March 4. Patrons with tickets for that date and for prior dates are asked to exchange them at the box-office. Jeanmaire was reported to be suffering from a virus infection of the upper respiratory system, but planned to play the "preview benefits" the first four days of next week.

Plays

Closing this week included Dial M For Murder, Mademoiselle Colombe, Bullfight, Coriolanus... Other announced closings include His and Hers-March 13, King and I-March 20, and Ruth Draper Show-March 14... King of Hearts will open at Lyceum Mar 31... By the Beautiful Sea will open at the Majestic in April... Me and Juliet will tour after closing at Majestic... 20 of the 26 shows which gave Washington Birthday matinees sold out... Anniversary Waltz is slated for the Broadhurst.

People

Gwen Verdon will leave Can-Can June 5... Audrey Hepburn will probably leave Ondine July 1... Julia Marlowe left \$650,000 to the Community Service Society... Eddie Garr was critically injured in a fire at Lambs Club... Paintings of Jeanmaire by Arbit Blatas will be shown March 1-10 at Associated American Artists, 711 5th... Phillip Pine has taken over role of Arab boy from James Dean in The Immoralist... Marshall Jamison has taken over direction of By The Beautiful Sea from Chuck Walters... Douglas McLean will play role created by Robert Ross in Kind Sir. Ross died of inflammation of the pancreas after a brief illness. Margalo Gilmore, also in the cast of Kind Sir, will return to her part next week. Her role is now being played by Audrey Ridgewell... Bette Grayson, ex-wife of Clifford Odets, died after a brief illness.

Other Broadways

Cleveland Press to sponsor a "Show Train" in April... Columbus Citizen's "Show Train" due in March 23... Pittsburgh "Show Train" due last week in April... Joseph Buloff won top notices in London version of Fifth Season, while play itself was panned... New Haven matinee of By The Beautiful Sea halted 10 minutes when lights went out during show.

Theatre Book Notes

"Confessions of a Theatre Maid" by Rae Lindsay, now with Martha Scott, being penned with aid of Whitney Bolton... Ken Parker's book of 8 plays published by Northwestern Press... Jessie Royce Landis autobiography is entitled "You Won't Be As Pretty, But You'll Know More."

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